

RUBRIC Toolkit: Institutional Repository (IR) Background

What is an Institutional Repository?

An Institutional Repository (IR) fills a need for:

- [open access](#)¹ to improve access to information
- sustainability to retain and preserve information through sustainable models
- [equilibrium](#)² in the process of taking research to the market (also known as the Scholarly Communication Crisis)
- [competitive edge](#)³ (at a personal and institutional level)
- compliance with governing bodies
- [logistics](#)⁴ to disseminate research

“At the most basic and fundamental level, an institutional repository is a recognition that the intellectual life and scholarship of our universities will increasingly be represented, documented, and shared in digital form, and that a primary responsibility of our universities is to exercise stewardship over these riches: both to make them available and to preserve them.

“An institutional repository is the means by which our universities will address this responsibility both to members of their communities and to the public. It is a new channel for structuring the university’s contribution to the broader world, and as such invites policy and cultural reassessment of this relationship.” [Lynch](#)⁵ (2003)

IRs centralize, preserve and make accessible the knowledge generated by academic institutions, and form part of a larger global system of repositories which are indexed in a standardised way and searchable using a common interface. IRs store electronic resources regardless of type or format, for example text, images, sound, data and, being institutionally sponsored, provide ongoing storage and access beyond the life of an individual computer, research project or organisational unit.

Keeping up to date with developments

There are many blogs and discussion lists about new developments in the open access and institutional repository movement, including:

- [Open Access News blog](#)⁶
- [archives of JISC-REPOSITORIES Discussion List](#)⁷
- [AuseAccess](#)⁸

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- [InstitutionalRepositoryCommunity-ANZ](#)⁹ (Google group for Australian IR Managers)
- [del.icio.us](#)¹⁰ a community bookmarking system used to tag sites of interest and share links; useful for keeping your local community informed about your IR project. The RUBRIC Project participants made extensive use of this tool to reduce the number of emails and make references easily retrievable
- [JISC CETIS News Feed](#)¹¹
- [Lorna Campbell's blog](#)¹²
- [Phil Barker's blog](#)¹³
- [Neil Fegen's blog](#)¹⁴
- [John Robertson's blog](#)¹⁵

The global IR movement

The global IR movement ensures open access research repository infrastructure will be created in a coordinated and sustainable fashion. Content housed in these repositories will be fed into retrieval engines such as Google and other discovery services.

The [SPARC Open Access Newsletter](#)¹⁶ is a good place to start to gain an overview of the Open Access IR movement internationally and provides links to very useful information such as:

- [Open Access Overview](#)¹⁷ (Peter Suber's introduction to OA for those new to the concept)
- [SPARC Open Access Newsletter and Free Online Scholarship \(FOS\) Newsletter Archive](#)¹⁸
- [Open Access News blog](#)¹⁹
- [SPARC Open Access Forum mailing list archive](#)²⁰
- [Open-Access Movement timeline](#)²¹
- [Conferences and workshops](#)²² related to the open-access movement
- [Ideas for promoting open access](#)²³

There has been a huge shift to online publishing and consumption of information over the last few decades. The global IR movement has developed from a need to manage documents which are “born digital” and to capture the digital intellectual output of an organisation. The IR movement has had significant implications for research impact and there is considerable debate surrounding citation factors. Some examples are:

- [press release on impact factors](#)²⁴ from BioMed Central
- [Citation Study](#)²⁵ (The Thomson Corporation 2004)
- [Citation Advantage of Open Access Articles](#)²⁶ (Eysenbach 2006)
- [Comparing the Impact of Open Access \(OA\) vs. Non-OA Articles in the Same Journals](#)²⁷ (Harnard and Brody 2004)

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Research ideas are primarily communicated “through collaboration, publication and presentation” [Harboe-Ree](#)²⁸ (2005). It is increasingly agreed that IRs “facilitate these activities by using technology to capture, store, expose and promote research output” ([ibid - wikipedia](#)²⁹).

Institutional Repositories have become core mechanisms to support University research activities, bringing such responsibilities as:

- controlling levels of access management
- establishing collection development and retention policies
- managing retrieval, re-use and federation of objects
- exploring links between repository content and full text sources.

In his [Free Online Scholarship Newsletter](#)³⁰, Peter Suber usually includes a “Round Up” of recent developments in the global IR movement. These are worth monitoring regularly for information.

The Australian IR movement

With significant research output “born digital”, universities of all types have a pressing need to develop and maintain open access repositories capable of managing research output and to ensuring ongoing accessibility. While direct resources are important, the impetus provided by accessibility to high quality research outputs is essential to ongoing research development. The reasoning behind the RUBRIC Project bid was that if smaller institutions were unable to keep pace, Australia would see an ever-widening digital divide between those conducting and maintaining scholarly research via repositories and those increasingly unable to participate.

The development of IRs in Australia began in line with the Open Access movement. They were mostly implemented by larger organisations and managed through the libraries of those organisations during the period 2002-2004. Early implementers generally selected the [ePrints](#)³¹ software and included:

- [ePrints](#)³² at the Australian Library and Information Association
- [ePrints](#)³³ at the Australian National University (now powered by [DSpace](#)³⁴)
- [espace@Curtin](#)³⁵ at Curtin Institute of Technology
- [eprints](#)³⁶ at the University of Queensland
- [ARROW](#)³⁷ at Monash University
- [ePrints](#)³⁸ at the Queensland University of Technology
- [ePrints](#)³⁹ at the University of Melbourne and
- [ePrints](#)⁴⁰ at the University of Tasmania.

A [support of the Open Access movement](#)⁴¹ statement was released by the “Group of Eight” in

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June 2004. The main focus of activity in the early 2000's was on making unrestricted research content available through IRs. Key issues were:

- software options
- driving up repository population statistics
- workflows
- service models

[Systemic Infrastructure Initiative grants](#)⁴² from [DEST](#)⁴³ began funding IR projects in Australia (from 2003) to investigate and document best practice. These included:

[FRODO](#) (Federated Repositories of Digital Objects), the first round of funded projects:

- [MAMS](#)⁴⁴: (Meta Access Management System) covered authentication, authorization and identity management issues
- [ARROW](#)⁴⁵: (Academic Research Repositories Online to the World) investigated software development
- [APSR](#)⁴⁶: (Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories) focused on sustainability and
- [ADT](#)⁴⁷: (Australasia Digital Theses) Program on digital theses management best practice

[MERRI](#) (Managed Environments for Research Repository Infrastructure) Projects came from a second round of funding and included:

- [RUBRIC](#)⁴⁸: Regional Universities Building Research Infrastructure Collaboratively was a collaborative efforts to roll out IR infrastructure to regional universities
- [OAK Law](#)⁴⁹ Open Access to Knowledge looked at Copyright Management in relation to IR development

Increasingly funding bodies are developing statements and policies surrounding the implementation of Open Access (OA) encouraging researchers “at the earliest opportunity to deposit their data and any publications arising from government-funded research in an appropriate repository that has free public access”. See:

- [statement outlining its support for open access in publishing](#)⁵⁰ by ARIIC (Australian Research Information Infrastructure)
- [official media release](#)⁵¹ from the ARC (Australian Research Council) and NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council), see also:
- [Higher Education supplement to The Australian](#)⁵² on December 13, 2006.

In Australia, the [Research Quality Framework](#)⁵³ (RQF) will have a major impact on the IR movement and its future.

References and Further Reading

Refer to the Further Reading section at the end of the Toolkit for bibliographic details of works referenced in this section.

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